



News Release

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

The Idaho Water Center, 322 E. Front St., Boise, ID - TEL: (208) 287-4800 FAX: (208) 287-6700

www.idwr.idaho.gov

Release 2005-35

Water Supply Forecast Improves but Idaho Still in for Another Dry Year

For Immediate Release
Boise, Idaho – April 13, 2005

For Media Information Contact:
Michael Keckler – (208) 287-4828

Idaho may be caught in a long-term drought cycle that occurs only once every 500 years, members of the Idaho Water Supply Committee learned at their meeting today in Boise. Despite that, there should be enough water this summer in most parts of the state the Committee concluded.

Recent rain showers improved the supply for irrigators who rely on the state's reservoirs because canal companies have been able to delay water releases. For instance, the Treasure Valley's Boise Project, which diverts into the New York Canal, just last month was predicted to be dry by mid to late August, will now likely run into September because the need for water was delayed.

Unfortunately, those who rely on natural flows will likely be in for a shortened irrigation season. In the Wood River Basin, the water supply is expected to be half what it should be. Reduced stream flows will also affect power generation. In fact, Snake River flows at King Hill could reach record lows this year. On a bright note, Idaho's whitewater rafting season should be extended many rivers because the flows shouldn't reach dangerous high levels, which normally occur during spring runoff.

Using a complicated formula developed in Colorado, IDWR Hydrologist Bill Ondrechen demonstrated for the committee how a drought lasting 4.3 years should occur in Idaho only once every 500 years. We've already exceeded that as we move into our sixth year of drought.

Given the below normal water supply, the Committee agreed to meet one more time in May.

-end-